

## **Annex C**

### **Better Bus Area Fund**

#### **Summary**

1. The Council proposes to submit a bid to the Department for Transport's (DfT) 'Better Bus Area Fund' for a sum of £2m. The City of York bid, to be submitted in partnership with the City's bus operators, serves to deliver a step change in bus patronage; aiding the economy and reducing carbon emissions.
2. Whilst not essential, DfT advises that it will give preference to bids which 'demonstrate financial commitment or match-funding from either the local authority or bus operators'. The Cabinet is therefore requested to consider match funding to a maximum total of £2m. The eventual sum required is dependent on the levels of third party contributions which can be secured (from bus operators and through developer funding).

#### **Background**

3. The objective of the 'Better Bus Area Fund' (BBAF) is to assist 'those local authorities who take a partnership approach to bus services in congested urban areas where increasing bus occupancy and achieving modal shift can free up valuable road space and reduce carbon emissions'.
4. The Department for Transport (DfT) is providing a total fund of £50m for which any urban local authority, working in partnership with its main bus operators, can bid to a total of £5m. A bid can be made for capital (infrastructure) or revenue (promotion, marketing, information, etc) measures or a combination of the two. Bids may not be submitted without the support of key local bus operators.
5. The DfT's guidance states that the bids will be judged on the strength of their evidence and analysis base. Further, the bid must be able to demonstrate that a sound implementation strategy is in place for each component of the proposed package of measures.
6. The BBAF is strongly aligned to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund in terms of its policy outcomes, but the BBAF is designed specifically to support the bus market and to deliver a growth in bus ridership over the short term, with the expenditure to be spent in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

## **The proposal**

7. The York bid will combine a range of capital and revenue measures with the aim of delivering a step change increase in the patronage on York's bus network. The proposal is divided into three distinct elements:
  - a. A bus priority spine to enhance bus reliability through the City
  - b. A city centre network of bus interchange hubs
  - c. A comprehensive ticketing and marketing strategy for the wholesale enhancement of the bus network.

### ***Bus priority spine***

8. The handful of streets and two bridges linking Clarence Street to Peasholme Green carry all of the bus services in York at one point or another. This proposal will include a range of measures to improve the ease with which buses can pass through the central area of the City. While delays to the bus network are unavoidable, one of the main obstacles to improving the attractiveness of the buses is the unpredictability of the delays. As a result, additional time has to be allowed in the bus schedule, necessitating additional bus operator resource; lengthening the travelling time for nearly all bus passengers in the city and making the bus less attractive compared to travelling by car.
9. Measures proposed to tackle unpredictable delay include CCTV-based enforcement of the central Coppergate area; a length of bus lane along Clarence Street to ease bus flow and the introduction of a bus controller for all of York's bus services to monitor punctual operation of services and, where necessary, take action (e.g. making loading vehicles which obstruct buses move on)..

### ***Bus interchange hubs***

10. One of the main complaints received by both bus operators and the Council concerns the absence of a bus station in York. There are many varying views held as to whether a bus station is desirable (or indeed achievable). In the absence of any obvious site to locate such a facility, however, it is clear that much could be done to improve the pleasantness, visibility and image of York's principal bus stopping points, and their development to allow passengers to interchange between services more easily and comfortably than at present.

11. A successful bid will result in the implementation of an on-street bus information strategy to deliver five city centre bus hubs at The Stonebow, Piccadilly/ Merchantgate, York Station, Theatre Royal/ Exhibition Square and a central interchange at Rougier Street/Station Rise. Each of the hubs will be equipped with improved waiting infrastructure and will be accompanied with clear on-street and on-line information to ensure that intending passengers know where to get their bus and when it will depart.
12. Many of York's bus stops are located in areas of historic importance (eg Exhibition Square and Museum Street). To improve the street scene in these and other areas (eg The Stonebow and Rougier Street which are considered unattractive by many) the Council will undertake a comprehensive refreshing of passenger waiting facilities and at-stop information provision. In line with the 'Reinvigorate York' strategy, these measures will serve to enhance rather than detract from the York street scene.

### ***Ticketing and marketing***

13. 2012 will see the introduction of a paper based ticket for use on any of York's buses, irrespective of the company operating the service. Building on the proposed bus operator investment in 'smart' enabled bus ticket machines, this bid will enable the Quality Bus Partnership to launch a multi-operator smart ticket.
14. The introduction of smart ticketing across the York bus network will increase the range of travel options, making the bus more attractive. Potential passengers who are dissuaded from using the service due to not knowing how much the bus costs or not having the appropriate change to pay for their fare will, with the assistance of bus operators, be a thing of the past.
15. The Council will work in partnership with the bus operators to undertake a programme of targeted marketing to encourage and incentivise bus usage. Further, the Council will work with the Quality Bus Partnership to deliver a step change transformation of at-street, on-line and mobile bus information output, attracting users of all generations and ensuring that it is as easy as possible for anybody wanting to use a bus to do so.

### ***Conclusion***

16. The Council assess that implementing the measures described above will bring a step change improvement to the overwhelming majority of the 15 million bus passenger trips which take place in York each year. This will be an important contribution to the Council's ongoing work to maximise the contribution bus use can make to reducing congestion and emission levels in York.